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ABSTRACT

A description of the use of flowcharts in teaching students of English as a second language (ESL) to "map" dialogue for conversation begins with a review of the literature concerning the flowchart form and content. Conversational form and logic and the discourse chart designed by Mohr and adapted for this study are discussed. The classroom activity plan used with this flowchart model at the University of Kansas Applied English Center is outlined. Five steps are suggested to lead students gradually from initial encounter with the discourse chart to the ability to converse logically without direct reference to the chart. The first step is to introduce the Mohr chart and develop familiarity with it. The second step involves plotting sample dialogues on the chart. The third step, accomplished by student pairs, is to develop a conversation from a topic and sequence provided by the teacher, using the chart. The fourth step is a flashcard exercise using groups of three or more students, in which one student holds up flashcards containing directions to students creating a conversation. The final step begins with a brief lecture in which the teacher explains the rules of conversation, implicit in the chart, and students pair off to create conversations according to directions given them. The dialogues are recorded for evaluation. Specific materials, techniques, sources for topics, and transcribed classroom conversations are provided as illustrations. A conversation grading chart and a sample flowchart are also included. (MSE)

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THE USE OF FLOWCHARTS AND LOGIC TO TEACH CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS IN ADVANCED ESL CLASSES

By

Robert Bruce Scott

B.A., University of Kansas, 1980

Submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and to the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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George Hughes

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For the Department

FL014406

This work is dedicated to my son,
Robert Bryan, whose birth provided
the impetus for me to begin working
towards this degree; also, to my late
parents, who always encouraged me
in my studies and set such good examples.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Context for the Study

This paper is directed to teachers in the two closely related fields of English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign language. Since oral fluency is not stressed quite as much in the latter field, this paper most directly addresses teachers of ESL. In ESL, we are interested in giving to our students an almost native-like command of English, so that it becomes their own language. ESL students need to be able to read efficiently and write effectively; however, these two skills can hardly compare in difficulty or importance to the skill of speaking and understanding English.

What distinguishes ESL from EFL is our attempt to teach speaking and understanding. The ideal towards which some of the more idealistic of us work is to see our former ESL students participate actively in conversations with native English speakers. These conversations might be about anything, ranging from the weather to deeper, more personal meanings. Above all, what separates the idealistic ESL teacher from the pragmatic ESL teacher is that the former one wants to take students beyond just the fluency required to survive in the United States: we want them to enjoy their English speaking experience in America.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the lack of adequate and realistic enough dialogue practice in the ESL classroom, students are at a disadvantage in the skill area of speaking and understanding. Although many of them can master a small repertoire of acceptable responses to a variety of typical questions, they lack the ability to spark interest and consciously move an English conversation towards any specific direction or goal. These students seem to lack a feel for the dynamics of conversation; all too often, they resort back to the security of the model dialogues which were presented in their ESL textbooks.

Too little time is spent preparing these students for open-ended conversations, despite the fact that native English speakers assume a conversation can go anywhere, depending on the moods and inputs of each participant. What these learners need is a dialogue map. Such a map would be analagous to a road map; road maps can be very detailed, yet the user always sees much more by traveling there directly. Similarly, a dialogue map could indicate many possible routes which a conversation might take, yet would only serve as a reliable guide to the more meaningful interactions which the learner discovers for himself or herself. There is no way that such a map could include every possible thing a person might say, since there are an infinite number of ways to combine English words into thought expressions. Instead, general categories should be used to describe kinds of statements.

Purpose of the Study

This study will first review literature pertaining to the topic areas of language flowcharting, communicative competence, and conversational form in order to discover a suitable dialogue map. Then, a teaching method will be presented to show how the map can be used. Although the term "map" illustrates the guiding function of the language flowchart, the term "chart" will be used in this study because it is the one used by everybody who has written on this subject.

Outline of the Study

First, credit will be given to the two researchers who first suggested the use of flowcharts in ESL, Mohan and Katz. After a discussion of their seminal article, "Communicative Competence and Flowcharts", there will be a review of subsequent literature about flowcharting and communicative competence. The major emphasis of the first half of the review of literature will be on the flowchart form. The second half of the review of literature will be on the contents of the flowchart; first, conversational form and logic itself will be discussed, and then the Mohr discourse chart will be presented.

The rest of the paper will be an account of how I adapted Mohr's chart for use in my speaking and understanding class.

Delimitations of the Study

The discourse chart and the teaching method which uses it are

best suited for university-level ESL students, since their high degree of intellectual development would assure that they can abstract a little and make use of their analytical skills in learning conversational form. Also, this teaching method is designed for students who have attained some proficiency in English, roughly equivalent to the third level at the Applied English Center. It is necessary that they already understand most English structures, as well as know a lot of words.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Form

The idea of flowcharting English conversations was introduced in 1977 by Mohan and Katz, in an article, "Communicative Competence and Flowcharts."[1] They describe a change in the focus of ESL teaching, from the traditional emphasis on grammatical and phonological aspects to the more recent emphasis on the use of language in situations. Since the standard way to teach this use of language is by dialogue, they suggest that there should be more techniques for using dialogues.

> The aim of this paper is to present one technique which has been helpful in structuring living situations in the classroom so that relevant dialogues can emerge, and which moves towards the goal of teaching our students to use English in whatever social context or situation they are likely to find themselves.[2]

Mohan and Katz point out that sociolinguists have used the term "communicative competence" to make a distinction between a language code and the use of that code. They cite an article by Dell Hymes from

[1]Bernard Mohan and Naomi Katz, "Communicative Competence and Flowcharts," TESL Talk, 8, no. 1(1977), pp. 25-31.

[2]Mohan and Katz, p. 25.

1967, in which he says that communicative competence is what "enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, where, when and to whom, etc..."[3] So, an ESL learner does not have communicative competence until he or she knows how to use English to fit various social contexts, according to Katz and Mohan:

> Obviously, this involves a knowledge of the culture of which the language is an expression. As teachers of the language, we become teachers of the culture if we place our emphasis on context or situation.[4]

Katz and Mohan borrow some of Hyme's terminology for their flowchart. A dialogue, from start to finish, is called a "speech event". The situation, or context, for the dialogue is called the "speech situation". One utterance, or one person speaking without interruption, is a single "speech act". It should be noted here that a speech act can in some cases constitute the entire speech event. For instance, consider any monologue, such as a speech, or a prayer consisting of a single word, such as "Om".[5]

At this point, Katz and Mohan introduce a distinction which they

[3]Dell Hymes, "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting," Journal of Social Issues, 23, no. 2(1967), p. 13.

[4]Mohan and Katz, p. 25.

[5]Hymes, pp. 19-20.

use to form a basis for their decision to concentrate on business dialogues. They suggest that there are two types of relationships, personal and transactional. The main difference between the two concerns their different purposes: in the transactional relationship, there is a limited and well-defined purpose towards which the participants are working; in personal relationships, purpose is a bit more difficult to define.[6] A further advantage of the transactional dialogue is that most of its possible speech events can be charted. On the other hand, explain Mohan and Katz, there are an infinite number of possible events and speech acts which might happen in personal conversations. They conclude that the limited focus of the transactional exchange makes it more suitable for work in the classroom.

Katz and Mohan borrow the idea of flowcharting from the field of computer science.[7] It should be mentioned here that flowcharting, or the construction of decision trees, is used in many other fields besides computer science. For instance, business problems are solved using decision trees, and qualitative analysis of unknown chemicals is conducted using a flowchart of laboratory tests. The best rationale for using the flowchart, according to Katz and Mohan, is that it "can help us to outline a speech event or situation, so that it can be seen as a whole, while, at the same time, each particular speech act can be isolated and worked on."[8]

[6]Katz and Mohan, p. 26.

[7]Katz and Mohan, p. 26.

[8]Katz and Mohan, p. 26.

> A flowchart can be used as a map of a transactional relationship between two people, which starts at the first linguistic encounter, providing alternatives to what happens next as it proceeds to the end of the encounter. Each move towards the end is a speech act. At any point along the way, input can be provided by the teacher or student.[9]

In their article, Mohan and Katz provide an illustration of the flowchart which they created for a shopping situation, with diamonds to represent speech acts by one or the other of the two participants, the clerk and the shopper. "Start" marks the beginning of the transaction and four different pathways are shown which lead up to "Stop", the end of the dialogue.[10]

English flowcharts were reintroduced in 1980 by J.B. Heaton, in his article, "Communication in the Classroom: Preparing a Functional Language Course for Teachers."[11] He suggests that there are straightforward patterns of classroom communication, which appear at a much more conscious level than do the patterns of outside conversation.

[9]Mohan and Katz, p. 26.

[10]Mohan and Katz, pp. 26-27.

[11]J.B. Heaton, "Communication in the Classroom: Preparing a Functional Language Course for Teachers," English Language Teaching Journal, 35, no. 1(1980), pp. 22-27.

"Inside the classroom a far more conscious and deliberate monitoring of communication by the teacher usually takes place."[12] During a class period the teacher is constantly checking to see if students are grasping the lesson. Strategies involved in teaching, according to Heaton, are: prompting, correction, repetition, and rephrasing.

Heaton uses the term "metacommunication" to refer to the kind of language used in the classroom. By metacommunication, he means "the type of communication used to check whether messages have been received and understood."[13] He suggests that metacommunication is very characteristic of the student-to-teacher dialogue.

The materials which Heaton presents are in response to the problem of how to train foreign specialists to teach their specialty in English to fluent speakers of English. Particularly, Heaton's work was directed at Chinese-speaking teachers of math, science, physical communication, art and music, and towards helping them to teach their subjects in the English medium of primary schools in Singapore. All of the teachers were graduates of a teacher-training course in Chinese at the Institute of Education in Singapore. Because they had been educated prior to a recent change over to English in Singapore, they had varying levels of English proficiency, and most of them were less than fluent. Their inability to use English made most of them feel uncomfortable in front of a class in which ordinary communication was done in English.

[12]Heaton, p. 22.

[13]Heaton, p. 23.

These teachers felt that their positions in their classrooms were being threatened as a result of their own poor English.

In order to prepare these teachers for the job of instructing students in English, they were taught English with an emphasis on their own special areas of study, but were also given lessons in classroom metacommunication. The metacommunication materials concentrated on twelve language functions to be learned through role-playing and simulation. Heaton outlines the twelve units in the course, with each related function:

Unit 1: Introduction in the classroom and related language functions involving the identification of individual pupils.

Unit 2: Making polite requests in the classroom, giving orders, and formulating general rules of behavior, conduct, etc...

Unit 3: Establishing attention signals and controlling pupils' attention.

Unit 4: Questioning in the classroom: i) "Yes/No" questions, ii) "Or" questions, and iii) "Wh" questions. Also, simplifying questions to conform to appropriate content and language difficulty levels.

Unit 5: Handling pupils' responses: accepting, correcting, and rejecting pupils' answers.

Unit 6: Repeating and rephrasing questions and answers as well as reporting class discussions and comments.

Unit 7: Telling pupils how to do things and giving written instructions(including simplifying and clarifying instructions).

Unit 8: Refusing and giving(qualified) permission.

Unit 9: Using different types of questions to monitor the various levels of the pupils' understanding of what is being taught: recall, comprehension, application, invention, and evaluation questions.

Unit 10: Warning pupils and giving advice.

Unit 11: Giving reasons and explaining: cause and effect. (Like the other units, this unit concentrates on the language functions required for helping and monitoring classroom management rather than on attempting to teach the language necessary for handling knowledge related particular subjects.)

Unit 12: Stating intentions, making suggestions, expressing degrees of probability, and speculating about future happenings.[14]

Although these units would seem to separate out each classroom language function, Heaton reminds the reader that the interpretation of a single utterance as fitting into one particular function is impossible, unless the context is known. "For example, the utterance 'Did you hear what I said, Eng Boon?' may be a request for information, an attempt to gain the attention of the pupil, or even a warning."[15] So, a single utterance, taken out of context, is open to misunderstanding.

Heaton also notes that any utterance could be fulfilling more than one function at once. He cites an example, "What did Rani do a moment ago?", which can serve to get the class' attention, to monitor Rani's response and check his understanding, and also to warn another student to pay attention in the future.[16] However, says Heaton, an utterance usually can be said to have one identifiable

[14]Heaton, pp. 22-23.

[15]Heaton, p. 24.

[16]Heaton, p. 24.

principal purpose. That is his rationale for separating the meta-communication materials into twelve units. Exercises used in each of the function units ranged from structured dialogue re-arrangement and cloze passages to the open-ended types of role plays. Special attention was given to phonology, and teachers were guided in the correct uses of stress and intonation, especially important in forming questions of various types.

According to Heaton, the most important part of each unit is the flowchart which accompanies the main dialogue and serves to introduce the particular function which is to be practiced. The flowcharts give students a visual outline of the situation being practiced in the main dialogue. Heaton refers to Dell Hymes when he states that "each flowchart shows clearly how particular speech acts combine to form a speech event."[17] Different alternatives which can take place after each speech act are clearly shown, and students can see at once the outline of the event and the situation in which the dialogue has its context.

> As there can be a large number of possibilities after a certain speech act, it is never claimed that each flowchart is capable of showing all the possibilities in a speech event: clearly, almost anything can happen. It is argued, however,

[17]Heaton, p. 25.

> that each flowchart in the program shows the most common alternatives which can be used. Moreover, by providing the student with the bare outline of the event and situation in simple visual terms, each flowchart serves to make him much more aware of what might take place in a typical classroom encounter.[18]

Heaton suggests that the use of flowcharts helps avoid the rigidity which is usually associated with dialogue practice in the classroom; also, the charts teach the user that "real-life" communication between the student and the teacher is not simply a matter of a certain stimulus used to elicit a fixed response.[19] Because of the availability of choices at each point in the flowchart, for both the teacher and the students, different routes through the chart are possible. So, it becomes clear that different participants in different circumstances will have different conversations. "The final conversation produced from a flowchart is determined entirely by the roles and needs of those participating in the dialogue."[20]

Included in Heaton's article is an example of how the flowchart is integrated into a particular unit, the one on handling pupils' responses. First, a model dialogue is presented and listened to and

[18]Heaton, p. 25.

[19]Heaton, p. 25.

[20]Heaton, p. 25.

studied carefully. Next, the teacher-trainees have to trace the dialogue through the flowchart, associating each utterance with a speech act identifier label. A simple route of speech act identifiers consists of: "teacher asks a question", "pupil answers correctly", and "teacher praises pupil". A more complicated string of identifiers is: "teacher asks question", "pupil gives vague or partly correct answer","teacher accepts part of answer and asks probing question", pupil now answers correctly", "teacher praises pupil(and may repeat answer)".[21] There are also return loops for when a student is unable to come up with a satisfactory answer, and the teacher must redirect the question to another student.

After following the model dialogue through this flowchart, the teacher-trainees work in pairs or small groups, constructing their own conversations to follow certain pathways through the flowchart. In this way, a balance is achieved between controlled practice and freedom of invention.[22] Later, control is relaxed, and the trainees are encouraged to make up even more creative conversations without referring directly to the chart. Heaton concludes his article by reporting that the use of these classroom metacommunication flowcharts was successful in helping the trainees to improve both their teaching techniques and their perceptions of teaching.

[21]Heaton, p. 26.

[22]Heaton, p. 27.

Since Mohan and Katz, as well as Heaton, found a basis for their flowcharts in the theories of Dell Hymes about communicative competence, a look at Hyme's article, "Models of Interaction of Language and Social Setting" should prove fruitful.[23]

Hymes begins by suggesting that there is a danger in trying to separate the study of language, as grammar, from the study of society. What develops from this separation, according to him, is a two-tier approach to linguistics, in which there are "institution-free grammars" and "grammar-free institutions".[24] What Hymes says is needed is a way to look at language and describe it in terms of the society to which it is inextricably bound. Such a description should not, he warns, be just the bringing together of results from each separate approach, but must be achieved with the unified object always in plain view.

Hymes calls for a study of speaking which would attempt to "describe the communicative competence that enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, when, where, and to whom."[25] This is what Mohan and Katz cited as their source of inspiration for the development of the language flowchart. According to them, by placing the emphasis on a given social context, or situation, and developing a chart of

[23]Hymes, pp. 8-28.

[24]Hymes, p. 13.

[25]Hymes, p. 13.

conversational options for that context, the ESL teacher is working on a fluency founded in communicative competence.[26] In order to study and describe communicative competence, proposes Hymes, it is first necessary to establish the terms with which to refer to various points of interaction between language and social setting. He offers a list of such terms, describing each one in some detail.

First, there is the speech community, which Hymes makes a point of distinguishing from a similar term used previously by Bloomfield in 1933, the the book, Language.[27] Bloomfield reduced the term to the notion of language, so that people who shared a language, no matter where they lived, were considered members of one speech community.[28] This one-sided approach, suggests Hymes, has colored linguistic study for many years. Only recently have some linguists started to recall that "it is not just language, but people, who are in contact" in a speech community.[29]

Hyme's idea of speech community is a group of people who share rules for the conduct and interpretation of acts of speech, as well as rules for interpreting at least one common linguistic code. However, code itself is not enough to establish a speech community.

[26]Mohan and Katz, p. 25.

[27]Leonard Bloomfield. Language. New York: Henry Holt, 1933.

[28]Hymes, p. 18.

[29]Lori Orser, "Michef: A Problem of Classification," Masters Thesis, University of Kansas, 1983.

> The sharing of code rules is not sufficient: there are persons whose English I can interpret, but whose message escapes me. Nor is the sharing of speech rules sufficient: such sharing may characterize a speech area(Sprechbund), comprising several distinct speech communities, not necessarily sharing a common language, but agreeing in patterns of speaking.[30]

For the connections between separate speech communities, Hymes uses the terms, "speech field" and "speech network". A speech field represents the complete range of different speech communities in which a person's knowledge of linguistic code and speaking rules allows him or her to operate. An example of speech field for an American speaker of English would be the various countries in which this language is spoken in similar ways: for instance, in almost all parts of the U.S.A., all over Canada(except perhaps Quebec), and all over England. The edges of the American's speech field might be found in Australia, Northern Ireland, The Irish Republic, and Scotland.

Speech network, according to Hymes, means the specific linkages of persons through code and speech rules across regular speech community boundaries. One obvious example of such a connection can

[30]Hymes, p. 18.

be found in the family ties which bridge physical distances and community differences. For instance, the author of this research paper has a speech network which stretches from Kansas to Ohio and Pennsylvania, where siblings and other close relatives live, with whom are shared heritage and ways of thought.

Within the speech community itself, Hymes presents sub-units: "speech situation", "speech event", and "speech act". These are, again, the terms which Mohan and Katz, as well as Heaton, borrow from Hymes to describe parts of the flowchart. Hyme's speech situation includes such varied activities as religious ceremonies, fights, hunts, meals, and love-making, all of which are comprised of both verbal and non-verbal action, and none of which is necessarily governed by just one set of rules(linguistic or social).[31]

Within each speech situation, there are speech events, activities which are governed directly by the rules of language use. Within the speech event lies the third sub-unit, speech act. One speech event can consist of just a single speech act, but most events include at least several acts. The speech act is considered by Hymes to be the smallest unit of social language. In much the same way that a single noun can comprise an entire noun phrase and even an entire sentence,

[31]Hymes, p. 19.

as in "Fire!", a single speech act can be the whole speech event and even the whole speech situation, such as in a ritual which consists of a single prayer, which is the single word, "Om".[32]

Katz and Mohan, as well as Heaton, discovered that these terms worked very well as descriptors for three similar units on the language flowchart. According to them, each flowchart involves a particular speech situation, in the context of which the various routes along the chart form speech events, each of which consists of a string of chosen speech acts. Although they did not mention it, each flowchart could further be identified as to the speech community in which it finds a context.

So far, articles have been summarized which introduce the idea of flowcharting English, give some suggestions for implementing the chart, and give terms to attach to various parts of the chart. Now, I will move the focus around to something more tangible: what belongs on the flowchart? The answer to that question requires first an answer to another one: what do ESL students need to learn about English conversation? Finally, all of this hinges on our having a clear understanding in our minds about what goes on when we talk.

[32]Hymes, pp. 19-20.

Content

The late Roman Jakobson, in "Linguistics and Poetics", his closing statement to Style in Language, presents a framework within which he says discussions about verbal communication should take place.[33] Although this framework was presented in the context of a discussion about literary style, it transfers nicely and adequately over to the study of conversation. According to Jakobson, there are six factors which constitute any verbal act. Although all six factors are present in an act, one of them at a time can be elevated to a dominant position which then influences and determines the main function of that act. At different points in a single conversation, any one of these factors could become dominant for a while, before subsiding as another factor takes over.[34]

Two obvious factors in any conversation are the addresser and the addressee, or the speaker and the listener. The function of a conversation dominated by the addresser is emotive, or expressive. An example of this function can be seen in the "sob story", in which the teller relates all his or her sufferings and misfortunes, in order to "get it all out into the open". When a conversation is addressee dominated, the function becomes what Jakobson calls conative, or connotative. In such conversations the listener is continuously busy re-interpreting the speaker's words, or responding

[33]Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Style in Language, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok(MIT, 1960), pp. 350-377.

[34]Jakobson, p. 353.

directly to them in some way. For instance, when the speaker says, "Drink!", the listener drinks.[35]

Another factor in verbal communication is context. When context dominates the conversation, then the function becomes referential; that is, everything said is in reference to or in response to a situation or shared experience between the participants of the conversation. Although the context does not have to be a physically observable one, it must be present in the minds of both participants for it to be considered a factor in the conversation. An example of a situation which would most likely exert a strong influence on a conversation can be seen if we imagine two soldiers talking in the middle of an active battleground: the possibility of them discussing their favorite T.V. show at a time like that is remote.

A fourth factor in verbal communication is the message, or content. If message dominates a verbal act, the function becomes poetic, in Jakobson's words. Poetic is not to be taken as synonymous with poetry.[36] It simply means that the focus is on meaning, for its own sake, and not for its effect on anything else. Clearness and conciseness accompany poetic conversations. One easily acknowledged example of the poetic function in a conversation is the pause which a person makes in order to choose exactly the right word to capture and convey a thought.

[35] Jakobson, p. 355.

[36] Jakobson, p. 356.

Another factor at work in conversations is contact, in Jakobson's words, "a physical channel and a psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication."[37] When contact ascends to a dominant influence in a conversation, there is said to exist a phatic function. This would include the use of certain signals simply to begin, continue, or stop a discussion. Other examples of this function are the ways in which one participant checks to see if the other one is listening and understanding: "Do you hear me?", "Are you there?" and "You know?", or "O.K.?".

The last factor in Jakobson's communication framework is code, or the language itself. When code dominates the conversation, the function is metalingual. This is when one participant checks to make sure the other one is using the same code as he or she is. Examples would include requests for word definitions, rephrasings, and repetitions.

Code is the focus of most ESL teaching, since students are mainly being helped to switch over from one code to another, in order for them to be able to take part in communication. However, it should be clear from Jakobson's model that code alone is not enough; it is only one of the six factors which comprise verbal communication. Especially at the advanced levels of ESL, the teacher must go beyond code lessons and give students help with the other areas of English.

[37] Jakobson, p. 353.

One step in the right direction can be discerned in Wilken's notional syllabus, which appears to be pointed at the contextual factor in Jakobson's framework.[38] Also, since foreign students often find themselves in conversations which are dominated by the other participant, there is a need in ESL for interest in the language learner as addresser; we have to help the learner to place himself or herself in at least a more equal, if not dominant, position through emotive strategies. Some of DiPietro's work deals with this difficult, yet important, area of the ESL learner's emotional needs as a human being.[39]

Although the contact factor is yet to be explored in ESL, and should be dealt with, there is a more pressing need today in the realm of message, or content. The inability to send clear messages and the inability to participate actively in message-sequencing are two problems which ESL teachers must help their students to resolve. Only then can these students enjoy productive conversations in English, in which they know where a conversation is headed and are able to help get it there. They need to learn the logic of conversational English.

In his article, "Logic and Conversation", H.P. Grice gives a

[38]D.A. Wilkens, Notional Syllabuses. London: Oxford, 1976.

[39]Robert J. DiPietro, "Discourse and Real-Life Roles in the ESL Classroom," TESOL Quarterly, 15, no. 1(1981), pp. 27-33.

definitive account of conversational principles which are always followed during good fruitful discussions.[40] First, he introduces the cooperative principle of conversation. Talk exchanges usually do not consist of disconnected statements, if we assume they are rational talk exchanges. Instead, there is a common goal, or a mutually accepted direction, which is recognized by each participant. This can be a goal which was established at the start of the conversation, or one which develops during the discussion.

The goal, or purpose, of a talk can be either definite or indefinite. If it is an indefinite goal, then conversational moves can take place over a wide range of topical territory. Yet, there are always some moves which just will not fit into the discussion. So, Grice formulates the principle: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."[41]

Under this broad principle, there are four categories of conversational rules: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.[42] The quantity rule requires that you make your conversational contribution as informative as is required, yet not give more information than is

[40] H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in Syntax and Semantics, v. 4, ed. John P. Kimball (Academic Press, 1975), pp. 41-58.

[41] Grice, p. 45.

[42] Grice, p. 45.

needed. Grice reminds the reader that over-informing, or rambling, not only wastes time, but often raises side issues and diverts the conversation away from the originally mutual goal, thus violating the cooperative principle.

For an example of a violation of the quantity rule, a student can be imagined standing in front of Watson Library at K.U. and asking a passerby for directions to the Applied English Center. In response to this simple request, the informant might give a detailed description of everything within a one mile radius of Lippincott Hall, finishing up with an historical account of the building and the Jimmy Green statue out front. An example of a violation at the other extreme would be the informant who just responds, "nearby", with no other visual or verbal hints as to the location of the AEC.

The second rule, of quality, includes a "supermaxim", which states that you should "try to make your contribution one that is true."[43] This entails not saying what you believe to be false, and not saying something for which you lack adequate evidence. Obviously, Grice is leaving little or no room in his logic for sarcasm or "little white lies". Both of these are cases in which the logic of conversation is broken in order to achieve a certain effect. That they do not often show up in ESL curriculum might be an

[43]Grice, p. 46.

indication that they are not very teachable, and a model of conversation which leaves them out should hardly be faulted for that omission.

One hopefully infrequent example of a violation of the quality rule would be the ESL teacher who, pressed to the wall by his or her inquisitive students, finally feels forced to invent a grammatical rule to explain a sentence satisfactorily for them. Although such a rule might quiet down the students for the time being, it will undoubtedly encourage them to make faulty generalizations about the language, based on a faulty rule, until another teacher catches on and corrects the mistake later on. This example points out what can be at stake when the quality rule is ignored during a conversation.

The third rule category is that of relation. Succinctly put, this is "be relevant".[44] An example of the violation of this rule would be the prospective employee at a job interview who, in response to the question,"Can you type?", answers,"I'm a hard worker and am very easy to get along with." Any non-sequitur constitutes a violation of the relation rule.

Rule category number four is manner. Here, Grice gives another supermaxim, "be perspicuous". By this is meant that the speaker should avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity, be brief, and

[44]Grice, p. 46.

be orderly.[45] One example of a violator of this rule would be the individual who tells his or her whole life story in response to the passing remark, "How's it going?". Often, the listener has to struggle to escape from a talk like this without offending the speaker.

Grice has supplied the ESL teacher with a widely inclusive, yet concise, nutshell description of conversational form. If these are indeed the rules which govern our discussions in English, then there should be a way to make ESL students aware of them. Such a system of rules, if shared between the teacher and students, would allow the teacher to make useful assessments of the message portion of each student's speech. This would give us a way to go beyond vague corrections, such as "That doesn't make sense" or "That doesn't sound quite right."

Before the rules are made explicit to the students, however, there must be a classroom model available which implicitly contains the logic of these rules. What is needed is a model, or exercise, in which correct answers correspond to the logic of conversation itself. Then, after extensive practice with such a model, the rules can be presented formally at a time when students can readily understand them as generalizations which they, themselves, have already begun to know intuitively. The key is to find the right model.

[45]Grice, p. 46.

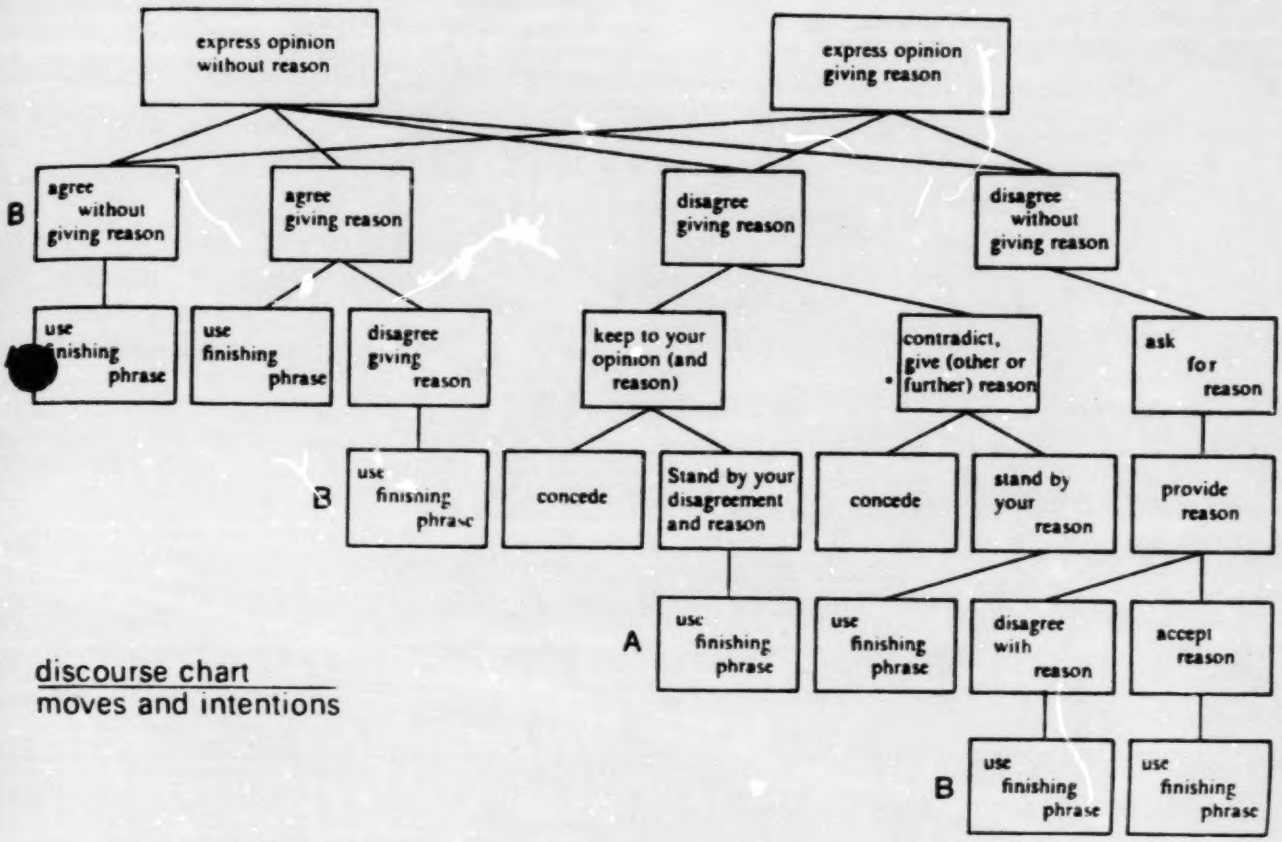
Union of Form and Content

The logic of conversational form links up with the concept of flowcharting in something called the discourse chart, developed in 1977 by Peter Mohr et al, of the Hesse State Institute for Curriculum and Educational Planning, in West Germany.[46] Message sequencing is clearly illustrated on the discourse chart, where there are alternative categories for opinion, reasons, agreement, disagreement, concession, and resolution.

Mohr's chart can be seen as a conversational model which implicitly teaches the rules delineated in Grice's article. First, the rule of quantity is upheld, since opinions without a sufficient amount of reasoning either force the conversation to end abruptly or force the other participant to send back a request for more information. Second, the rule of quality is upheld, since reasons can be contradicted and held up to inspection by either participant. Third, the rule of relevance is upheld, since nothing except a relevant statement can be made to fit into any of the available categories. Fourth, the rule of manner is upheld, since orderliness and directness are intrinsic to the discourse chart itself.

[46]Peter Mohr, Discourse Chart, in The Communicative Teaching of English: Principles and an Exercise Typology, ed. Christopher N. Candlin(Longman, 1981), pp. 154-157.

Finally, the overriding cooperative principle is served by the narrow scope which is established at the beginning of each conversation, by the opinion of the first speaker; what the next speaker says is in direct response to that opinion, and so a topic is mutually agreed upon. The correct carrier for Grice's conversational rules has been found in Mohr's chart.



discourse chart
moves and intentions

from:

Peter Mohr, Discourse Chart, in The Communicative Teaching of English: Principles and an Exercise Typology, ed. Christopher N. Candlin (Longman, 1981), p. 154.

Chapter Three

USING THE CHART

Before beginning this section on teaching methods, it is important to point out that this paper deals only with logical conversation. However, it should not be assumed that all native English conversations are logical. In fact, many conversations in English are simply exercises in free association, with no discernible form, goal, or purpose other than for enjoyment. These free-style conversations lie outside the realm of ESL instruction; our students can hardly be expected to achieve complete competency for such free-form discussions, as this would entail profound experience within the language and a wide knowledge of various connotations and associations which are inextricably bound to the culture. However, ESL students should be expected to achieve another kind of fluency, in which they become able to consciously move a talk in a given direction by building upon what has been said, and by following the rules outlined in Grice's article.[1]

The goal, then, of the following classroom activity plan is to impress upon the student's mind a logical strategy which will allow him or her to participate more fully in English conversations. Five steps will be suggested, to lead the student gradually from an initial encounter with the discourse chart to the eventual ability to converse logically without direct reference to the chart. This procedure is based on my own experience teaching the chart this semester.

[1]Grice, pp. 41-58.

The first step is to familiarize the students with the Mohr discourse chart. This will be made much easier if students have had some previous exposure to agreement and disagreement, as can be found in notional textbooks. Before showing students the entire chart, the teacher should review each of the category labels which appear on it. This review is best done with reference to examples which show the function indicated by each category. For instance, after an initial statement, "John seems like a nice guy", an example of Agree, Giving Reason would be,"Yes, and he's such a diligent worker on that computer terminal." I am here taking for granted that the concept of being a nice guy can include how a person performs his or her work.

When individual terms have been gone over and students seem to understand them, the teacher can introduce the chart as a whole. This can be done either on an overhead projector or on individual handouts, or both. The advantage of individual chart handouts is that students can take them home and experiment with them on their own. Students at an advanced level of English, as at the third level in the Applied English Center at K.U., appear to have very little trouble understanding the discourse chart and what it represents. It also seems to catch their interest. The teacher should follow several simple dialogues through the chart to help students see how it works.

After students are comfortable with the chart, they can begin step two. Borrowing this step from J.B. Heaton's method, the teacher can now provide students with sample dialogues which they must plot along a route on the chart.[2] These dialogues can be found in different places, such as ESL textbooks, television and theater screenplays, and cassette recordings of native talk. The teacher will occasionally need to make some adjustments in these conversations in order that they fit neatly and easily into particular pathways along the discourse chart. The teacher can also make up conversations from his or her imagination; however, it is not a good idea to depend entirely upon such conversations, because they tend to contain an inner logic which differs somewhat from the shared logic of actual conversations. Students can work on this charting exercise in pairs, thus checking each other's answers before asking the teacher for help. The teacher will find that some of the students enjoy saying the dialogues out loud in order to practice their pronunciation.

There are bound to be times when only the teacher can tell into which category a particular statement fits best. Some statements will fit easily into their categories; others will be difficult to squeeze into the constraints of a particular category. This is analagous to the problem that English grammar teachers face when the rules they are teaching come up against correct sentences which happen to ignore the rules. Since, at this early stage in the discourse chart exercise, students are trying to learn a useful new rule system for conversation, the teacher should avoid introducing problematic statements.

[2]Heaton, p. 26.

The following is one of the dialogues used in step two. It is helpful to begin each dialogue with a question, the answer to which must fit into one or the other opinion category. This dialogue was invented to reflect an ongoing controversy at that time.

B: "What do you think of the U.S. involvement in Lebanon and Grenada?"

A: "They should keep out of other people's business."

B: "I disagree. The U.S. has an obligation to help other countries when they are in trouble. That's what they're doing in both places."

A: "Since when is the U.S. responsible for other countries? They should live and let live."

B: "I just don't think that's a realistic attitude in our modern world, where everything is so interrelated and interdependent."

A: "It sounds like we might never be able to agree about this, so let's drop it, O.K.?"

In order to understand that A's second statement fits into the category of Keep to Your Opinion and Reason, it will be necessary to explain what a rhetorical question is. Also, students might be interested in the fact that "live and let live" is a cliche. Another interesting thing students begin to learn here is how to exit a conversation.

When students are adept at representing a conversation with a path on the discourse chart, they are ready for the third step. In this step, it is necessary for students to work in pairs. One student is speaker A and the other one is B. A handout is given to them which contains five or six topics, questions, or problems for discussion.

For each topic, a particular sequence from the discourse chart is given, which they have to follow in creating a conversation. The conversations are written down so that the teacher can check them later, to be sure that they fit the targeted categories. Again, this is a step borrowed from Heaton.[3]

It has been found useful to repeat topics on the handout, changing only the discourse sequence which must be followed. This forces students to look at a question from two points of view; in one conversation, they might have to support one opinion with reasons, while in the next conversation they have to support the opposite opinion with other reasons. This helps students to grasp an important concept, that is, your own opinion takes shape as you begin to understand differing opinions and see the way in which they conflict or coincide with your own.

As Heaton suggests, this third step, when preceded by the second, establishes a nice balance between controlled practice and freedom of invention.[4] In fact, it would not be a bad idea if, for several class periods, students alternated between steps two and three. These two steps are, after all, the crux of the entire discourse chart activity. In step two, students are forced to discipline their minds in an effort to interpret statements within a logical framework. In step three, they are forced to create their

[3]Heaton, p. 27.

[4]Heaton, p. 27.

own statements within that same disciplined, logical mind set.

The following is an example of a step three exercise. Students are instructed to create dialogues with their partners to fit the given discourse chart route.

Question: Should third level AEC students be allowed to take a full course load of regular K.U. classes in addition to their English classes?

A:(express opinion giving reason)

B:(disagree without giving reason)

A:(ask for reason)

B:(provide reason)

A:(accept reason)

B:(use a finishing phrase)

It is very important to choose topics about which students are bound to have opinions. Of course, a good rule-of-thumb is to avoid any topic which deals with religion or sex. Otherwise, the topical territory is pretty wide open, especially since the opinions stated in these exercises are in response to clear directions, not necessarily indicative of one's true belief. This is a very non-threatening way in which to get students arguing in the classroom.

The fourth step will serve as a bridge between silent, written work which directly refers to the discourse chart, and actual conversations which no longer refer either directly or indirectly to the chart. This bridge step is a flashcard exercise. It involves at

least three people at one time. One student holds up cards as cues for the other two students to follow in having a conversation. There should be two colors of cards, to make it clear which participant is indicated by each card. The first card, a white one, carries a question or problem to be answered or solved. The next card is the first colored one and indicates to the first speaker how he or she is to address the topic, that is, opinion without reason or opinion with reason. Cards are sequenced to follow a particular path along the discourse chart. Of course, the students are now seeing only the cue cards, one at a time, and not the chart. They should be given as much time as needed to respond to their cues.

A sample introductory question and cue card sequence follows. It should be kept in mind that each of the labels was written in thick magic marker on a colored 8½ X 11 sheet of paper.

What is the one most important thing humans need to be happy?

(grey) express opinion, without reason

(yellow) disagree, without giving reason

(grey) ask for reason

(yellow) provide reason

(grey) disagree with the reason

(yellow) keep to your opinion and reason

(grey) concede

Since the flashcard activity is oral work, it thereby demands the full attention of the teacher, who needs to monitor not only content, but also pronunciation and grammar. There are three ways to reconcile this fact with the fact that there are more than three students in a class. First, the exercise can be performed by three students at a time, in front of the entire class. The rest of the students can observe the conversation in progress, while working on each response in their own minds also. Furthermore, they can be encouraged to pay close attention so as to be able to correct the participants whenever a mistake is made.

A second way to include all the students in this activity is by dividing the class on the basis of how well they have performed in steps two and three. Students who have mastered step three can form a group of up to five or six, and begin the flashcard drill, with three participating at a time, while the others in the group observe and check them. Students who need more work on step three can be given the same questions which are being used in the flashcard activity, but on a handout like others used in step three. They work in pairs to create conversations together. The teacher only needs to monitor the flashcard activity, since it is the only oral work being done.

The flashcard activity progresses more rapidly than does the corresponding written activity, so that flashcard participants, when

they are finished, can go over and pair off with students who have been working on the handout. In other words, approximately the first half of the step three handout exercise is completed by one pair of students, before they split up and each pair off again with one of the flashcard participants. Having already heard or participated in the handout conversations, these advanced students can help coach the others to proficiency at step three.

A third way in which to include all the students in the step four activity is to separate the class into two groups, A and B. These groups then line up on opposite sides of the room, although not necessarily miles apart. What ensues is a debate-like activity, in which a discussion over a given topic or question takes place, alternating between group A and group B. When it is group A's turn to make a statement, the next person in line from group A must provide it. If he or she fails, the group loses a point, and the next person in line gives the statement. This activity, in order to have some continuity, requires that the teacher provide an extended discourse sequence, beyond the number of exchanges given on Mohr's chart. This activity creates a surprising amount of enthusiasm in the class, as it gets everyone highly attentive to the development of each conversation: each student forms the answer in his or her own mind while waiting to see if his or her teammate gets it right or if a person from the other team gets it wrong.

Any student who cannot respond to his or her cues in step four

should be led back through steps two and three, until he or she is more proficient. When students are able to respond accurately to their cues in step four, the teacher can begin to demand some improvement in their response times. Speed should be given some attention since exceptionally long pauses are not generally acceptable in conversational English. Of course, in the discourse chart activity, the accuracy of the message is of paramount importance. Students should remain at step four until their statements come readily and fit clearly into the target categories shown on the flashcards.

The fifth and final step allows students to converse without reference to either the chart or the labels from the chart. This step begins with a five or ten minute lecture in which the teacher clearly and concisely explains Grice's rules of logical conversation.[5] Students will accept these rules as sensible, and even blatantly obvious, since the rules are just explicit expressions of what is contained implicitly in the discourse chart.

Students next pair off for the recorded conversation activity. Each pair is given a topic for discussion, and their talk is recorded so that the teacher can analyze it for accordance with Grice's rules. A conversation grading chart is included in this chapter to help the teacher in assessments of each student's side of the dialogue. Conversations can be transcribed, and then assessed in each of the

[5]Grice, pp. 41-58.

four rule categories. Finally, the teacher will need to make some assessment of whether students obeyed the cooperative principle.

The following is a transcript of one taped conversation, including all the original grammatical mistakes. Students were given copies of the transcript with their grammar errors marked and corrected for them. On another copy of the transcript, they were given a score from the grading chart on the logic of their conversation.

Question: Why are there wars?

R: "I think that the first cause of the wars in the world is the economics interest about the nations."

J: "I think that the major cause of the war is the political problem because in the world there are several different political parties. They hold different idea and so I think that political problem is the major cause of the war."

R: "I know that one cause of the wars is the political situation or political interest, but I think that the first is economic interest because the economic interest influence of the government and the problem change for political interest, but the big cause to go to war is economic interest."

J: "Maybe you are right, but I still think the political problem is the major cause, and even though I think the political problem cause the economic problem and since the different society hold different political idea, so their economics develop in a different way, so I think the political is the major cause."

R: "O.K., I think that both economic and political interests are the big causes for the war in the world."

R received 20 in the rule categories of quantity, quality, and relevance; a fifteen in manner, because of grammatical mistakes which cause

his second statement to lack clarity; and a twenty in his overall adherence to the cooperative principle. J received 20 in quality and relevance; a nineteen in quantity, for his first statement fails to provide the reason implied in his use of the adverb, because; a ten in manner, because his second statement lacks order, due to his misuse of the adverbs, eventhough and since; and a twenty in his overall adherence to the cooperative principle. So, R received a total of 95 points out of 100, while J received 89.

Conversation Grading Chart

Instructions: Under each rule category, choose the descriptor which best fits the student's contributions. Award the student the corresponding number of points in that category. Finally, give an assessment of how well the student followed the cooperative principle, on a scale of one to twenty points. Total possible points is one hundred.

Quantity:	0	rambling uncontrollably
	5	too much extraneous information
	15	too much detail, but message and direction clear
	20	appropriate
	15	lacking in detail, but message and direction clear
	5	essential information lacking
	0	silence
Quality:	0	central statement is contrary to fact
	5	central statement could be true, but faulty reasons given
	10	central statement could be true, no reason given
	15	central statement probably true, no reason given
	20	central statement nicely supported by reasons
Relevance:	0	nonsense(non-sequiturs)
	5	bordering on nonsense, but touching topic
	10	each statement has some relationship to preceding ones
	15	statements often directly connected to previous ones
	20	relevant contributions every time
Manner:	0	disorganized and ambiguous
	5	loosely organized and ambiguous
	10	loosely organized and clear
	15	well organized, but ambiguous
	20	well organized and clear(perspicuous)

Chapter Four

CONCLUSIONS

The rationale for this research paper has been the need today for advanced ESL students to have classroom activities which focus not only on how they speak, but on what they say. It is too easy as a teacher to fall into the security of a textbook exercise which only requires you to notice pronunciation and grammar errors, without paying attention to content. This temptation to concentrate only on grammar and pronunciation is accentuated by the fact that many of the typical speaking class activities do not lend themselves to original thought on the part of students. These activities include: reading aloud of someone else's ideas; minimal pair distinctions based on sound, not meaning; memorization of dialogues; and role plays.

All of the above activities have their place in the speaking and understanding class, especially at beginning levels, but, at advanced levels, they need to be augmented by other activities which place an emphasis on meaning itself. One traditional activity which does this is speech giving. Role plays can also emphasize meaning, if pronunciation problems are worked out before the final presentations, and if the roles themselves are ones in which the students can really imagine themselves appearing.[1] Another activity which stresses the content of speaking and understanding is problem solving, in which members of a group have to discuss alternative solutions and

[1]DiPietro, p. 31.

come to some concensus.

What this research paper has presented is a new way to use dialogues in the ESL classroom. While previous dialogue exercises involved memorization of models, or improvisation with little or no guidance, the discourse chart teaches students a logical strategy for dialogues. This gives them a logical conversational pattern which they can count on finding in their subsequent discussions in English; if they do not find it, they can impose it themselves upon the conversations they have. This discourse chart forces students to work on listening skills, since they have to be able to pick out the main idea or opinion or reason with which to agree or disagree; it also makes them work on speaking skills, since they must make their own position in each discussion perfectly clear.

The discourse chart activity should not be seen as completely in contradistinction to the teaching of correct pronunciation and grammar, because it can lend itself to a focus on either or both of these crucial areas. The fact is that the discourse chart activity simply gives students some compelling reasons for talking. The fact that they are trying to say something meaningful should not upset the ESL teacher who would rather work on pronunciation or grammar; instead, the teacher should see this as a unique opportunity to assess how well the students handle the details of English during actual conversation.

Content should be seen as the ascendant constituent of verbal communication in the discourse chart activities; however, it is complemented and even supported to a large extent by the code constituent, which entails both grammar and pronunciation.[2] Thus, grammar and pronunciation will have to be accurate if very meaningful statements are to be uttered. The point is that neither grammar alone nor pronunciation alone, nor both of them together, is sufficient for meaningful discussions in English. The discourse chart adds the necessary third ingredient for meaningful speech: a reason to talk.

One implicit assumption made in this paper has been that ESL students need to learn the logic of conversation in English because it is different from the logic of conversation in their own languages. Even if this were not so, there would be another compelling reason to use the discourse chart and Grice's rules, simply on the basis of the typical experience one has in learning a second language. Many things which existed on an unconscious level in the native language become extremely conscious aspects of communication in the second language. For example, it is not necessary for the native speaker of English to have a formal knowledge of English grammar in order to use the language: in fact, such knowledge might even impede natural use of the language. But, when learning a new language, a person becomes very much aware of grammar, and constant comparisons are made between the grammars of the two languages. Many of these comparisons

[2]Jakobson, p. 353.

show up similarities which are useful to be aware of. If the logic of English turned out to be identical to that of other languages, then formal knowledge of it could aid the ESL student in approaching conversations in English.

However, some tentative investigation into a contrastive analysis of Spanish and English conversation would appear to suggest that there is a difference in the rule category of manner. In English, it is important to be "perspicuous" and direct; however, this aspect of our language makes many Spanish speakers perceive us as rude in some situations which, in their manner rule, would dictate roundaboutness. This is only a tentative finding, and there would seem to be a need for serious linguistic work in this area.

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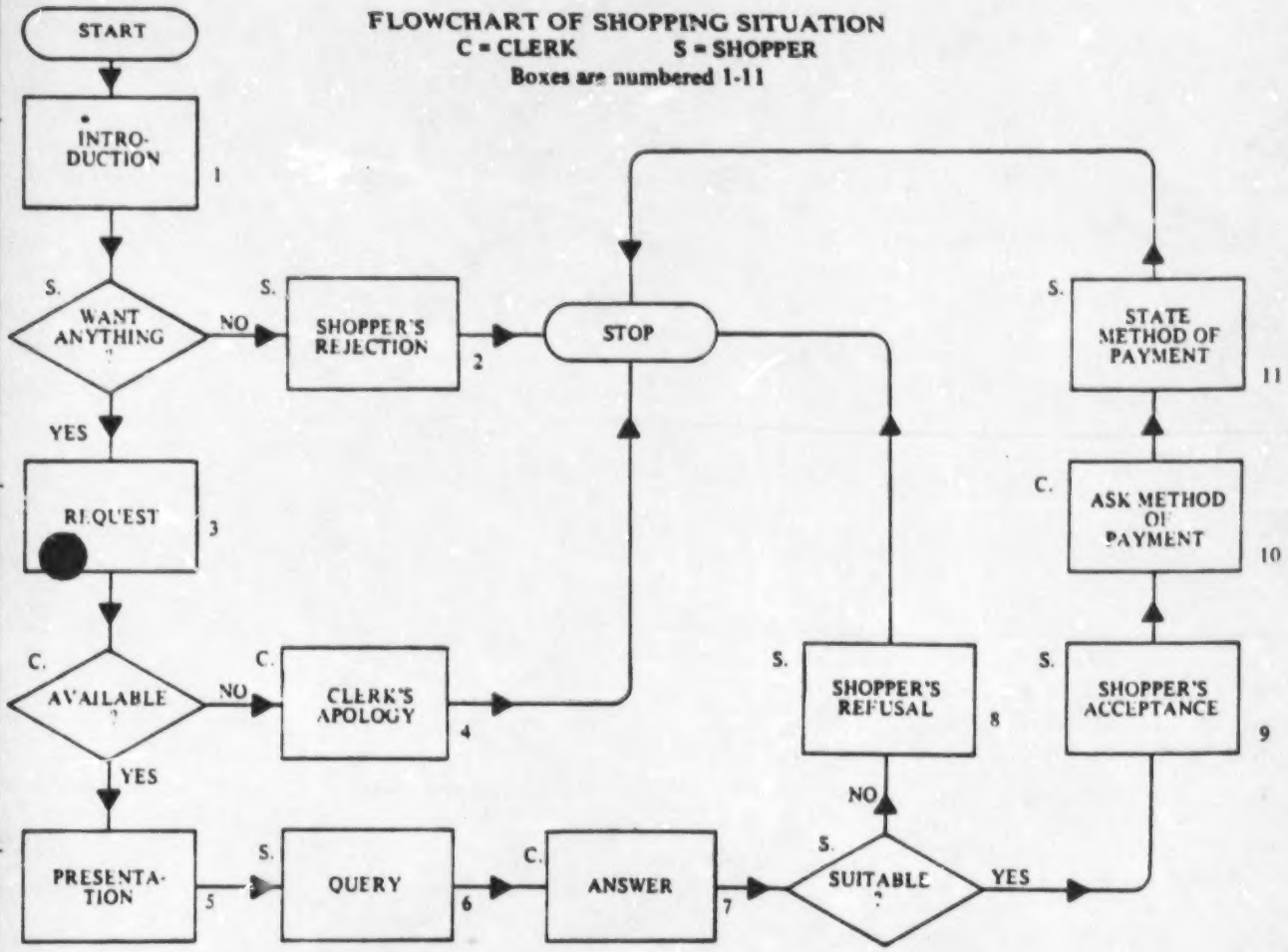
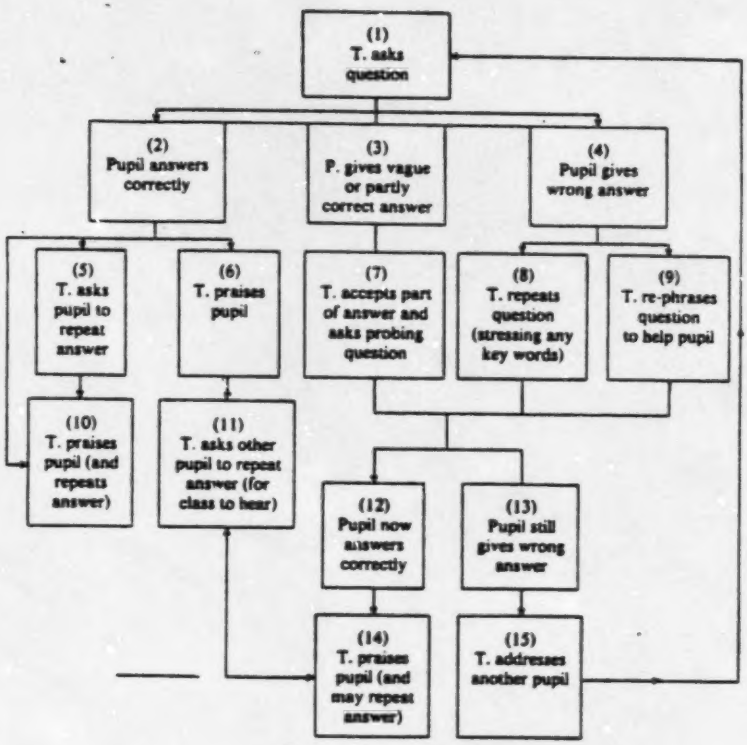
APPENDIX

Mohan and Katz Shopping Chart



from:
Mohan, Bernard and Naomi Katz, "Communicative Competence and Flowcharts," TESL Talk, 8, no. 1(1977), p. 27.

Heaton Metacommunication Chart



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